

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are as follows:

1. An interior rearview mirror assembly for a vehicle comprising:
a mirror case including a reflective mirror element;
a support for securing said assembly on the vehicle;
said assembly including a non-incandescent, directed, low level, light emitting source;

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said light emitting source positioned to provide directed, low level illumination of an interior portion of the vehicle.

2. The assembly of claim 1 including a mount receiving said light emitting source.
3. The assembly of claim 2 wherein said mount is on or within at least one of said mirror case and said support.
4. The assembly of claim 3 wherein said mount is on or within said mirror case.
5. The assembly of claim 4 wherein said mirror case includes a peripheral portion having a bottom; said mount and light emitting source being located so as to emit downwardly from said bottom.
6. The assembly of claim 5 further including a light opening in said bottom of said mirror case; at least one incandescent lamp for providing general illumination in the vehicle, said lamp being mounted on said mirror case and directing light downwardly through said light opening.
7. The assembly of claim 5 wherein said at least one of said mirror case and said support includes an aperture; said mount including a hollow adapter having opposed ends secured in said aperture; one of said ends receiving said light emitting source therein, the other of said ends opening through said aperture.

8. The assembly of claim 7 wherein said other end of said hollow adapter includes a lens through which light from said light emitting source is directed.

9. The assembly of claim 8 wherein said hollow adapter is cylindrical and includes spaced flanges on the exterior thereof for securing said adapter on said bottom; said light emitting diode also being cylindrical and telescoped within said one end of said adapter.

10. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said interior portion of the vehicle comprises at least one of an instrument panel area of the vehicle and a console area of the vehicle.

11. The assembly of claim 10 wherein said console area is one of a floor console area, a side door console area, a shift lever console area, and a roof console area.

12. The assembly of claim 10 wherein said interior portion is a shift lever console.

13. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said light emitting source is solid state.

14. The assembly of claim 13 wherein said solid state light emitting source is a light emitting diode.

15. The assembly of claim 14 including an electrical resistor connected in series with said light emitting diode.

16. The assembly of claim 15 wherein said light emitting diode operates at a current less than about 200 mA.

17. The assembly of claim 15 wherein said light emitting diode provides a light level of less than about 60 lux when measured at about 22 to 26 inches from said light emitting source.

18. The assembly of claim 15 wherein said resistor has a resistance of less than about 1500 ohms and greater than about 100 ohms.

19. The assembly of claim 18 wherein said resistor has a resistance within the range of between about 1000 and 200 ohms.

20. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said support includes a mounting arm, said light emitting source being mounted on or within said mounting arm.

21. The assembly of claim 20 wherein at least one of said mirror case and mounting arm includes a mounting ball; the other of said mirror case and mounting arm including a socket receiving said mounting ball for pivotal adjustment of the position of said mirror case.

22. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said support is adapted for connection to the header area of a vehicle adjacent the windshield.

23. The assembly of claim 22 wherein said light emitting source is located on or within said support.

24. The assembly of claim 1 including a vehicle accessory mounting pod attached to said support; said light emitting source being located on or within said pod.

25. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said light emitting source is selected from the group consisting of a light emitting diode, a vacuum fluorescent source, an electroluminescent source, and a semiconductor laser source.

26. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said light emitting source emits light having a wavelength producing a color selected from the group consisting essentially of green, yellow, red, blue, orange, amber and reddish-orange.

27. The assembly of claim 26 wherein said light emitting source emits light having a wavelength producing a color selected from the group consisting essentially of amber, red and reddish-orange.

28. The assembly of claim 1 further including at least one incandescent lamp for providing general illumination in the vehicle.

29. The assembly of claim 28 wherein said mirror case includes a pair of incandescent lamps for general illumination in the vehicle, said lamps being spaced from one another and said low level light emitting source.

30. The assembly of claim 29 including at least one electrical switch for controlling said lamps and a rheostat electrically connected to said light emitting source for controlling the light output of said light emitting source.

31. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said light emitting source operates at a current less than or equal to about 200 mA.

32. The assembly of claim 31 wherein said light emitting source operates at a current of less than or equal to about 20 mA.

33. The assembly of claim 31 wherein said light emitting source operates at a current within the range of about 20 to about 100 mA.

34. The assembly of claim 33 wherein said light emitting source provides illumination of between about 0.2 and 4.0 lux at a distance of about 22 to 26 inches from said source.

35. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said assembly is an electrically operated rearview mirror assembly.

36. The assembly of claim 35 wherein said reflective mirror element is an electro-optic element including an electrochromic medium adapted to darken when an electrical voltage is applied thereacross.

37. An interior rearview mirror assembly for a vehicle comprising:
a mirror case including a reflective mirror element;

a support for securing said assembly on the vehicle;

said mirror case including at least two non-incandescent, directed, low level, light emitting sources, each of said light emitting sources positioned to provide directed, low level illumination of an interior portion of the vehicle.

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38. The assembly of claim 37 wherein each of said light emitting sources is directed at a different interior portion of the vehicle.

39. The assembly of claim 37 including a pair of mounts, each mount receiving one of said light emitting sources on or within at least one of said mirror case and said support.

40. The assembly of claim 39 wherein both of said mounts and said light emitting sources are on or within said mirror case.

41. The assembly of claim 40 wherein one of said mounts and one of said light emitting sources is mounted at a position spaced from the second of said mounts and the second of said light emitting sources on or within said mirror case.

42. The assembly of claim 40 wherein said mirror case includes a peripheral portion having a bottom; each of said mounts and light emitting sources being located so as to emit downwardly from said bottom.

43. The assembly of claim 42 wherein said mirror case bottom includes a pair of apertures; each of said mounts including a hollow adapter having opposed ends secured in a respective one of said apertures; one of said ends receiving said light emitting source therein, the other of said ends opening through said bottom.

44. The assembly of claim 43 wherein each of said hollow adapters includes a lens through which light from said light emitting source is directed.

45. The assembly of claim 37 wherein said interior portion of the vehicle comprises at least one of an instrument panel area of the vehicle and a console area of the vehicle.

46. The assembly of claim 45 wherein said console area is one of a floor console area, a side door console area, a shift lever console area, and a roof console area.

47. The assembly of claim 45 wherein said interior portion is a shift lever console.

48. The assembly of claim 37 wherein each of said light emitting sources is selected from the group consisting of a light emitting diode, a vacuum fluorescent source, an electroluminescent source, and a semiconductor laser source.

49. The assembly of claim 37 wherein each of said light emitting sources is a light emitting diode; said assembly including a pair of electrical resistors, one of said resistors connected in series with one of said light emitting diodes, the other of said resistors connected in series with the other of said light emitting diodes.

50. The assembly of claim 37 wherein each of said light emitting sources is a light emitting diode; said assembly including a common electrical resistor connected in series with said light emitting diodes.

51. The assembly of claim 37 further including at least one incandescent lamp for providing general illumination in the vehicle.

52. The assembly of claim 51 wherein said mirror case includes a pair of said lamps mounted for general illumination in the vehicle, said lamps being spaced from one another and said low level light emitting sources.

53. The assembly of claim 37 wherein said reflective mirror element is an electro-optic element including an electrochromic medium adapted to darken when an electrical voltage is applied thereacross.

54. An interior rearview mirror assembly for a vehicle comprising:

a mirror case including a reflective mirror element and a non-incandescent, directed, low level, light emitting source;

5 said light emitting source positioned to provide directed, low level illumination of an interior portion of the vehicle.

55. The assembly of claim 54 wherein said interior portion of the vehicle comprises at least one of an instrument panel area and a console area of the vehicle.

56. The assembly of claim 55 further including at least one lamp for providing general illumination in the vehicle.

57. The assembly of claim 54 wherein said light emitting source is selected from the group consisting essentially of a light emitting diode, a vacuum fluorescent source, an electroluminescent source and a semiconductor laser source.

58. The assembly of claim 54 wherein said light emitting source is a light emitting diode; said assembly further including an electrical resistor connected in series with said light emitting diode.

59. The assembly of claim 54 wherein said reflective mirror element is an electro-optic element including an electrochromic medium adapted to darken when an electrical voltage is applied thereacross.

60. An interior lamp assembly for a vehicle comprising:

a support;

an incandescent lamp to provide general illumination within the vehicle;

5 said assembly including a non-incandescent, directed, low level, light emitting source, said light emitting source positioned to provide directed, low level illumination of an interior portion of the vehicle.

61. The interior lamp assembly of claim 60 including an electrical switch connected in series with said lamp for controlling operation of said lamp.

62. The interior lamp assembly of claim 61 wherein said switch is mounted on said support.

63. The interior lamp assembly of claim 61 wherein said assembly also includes an electrical resistor connected in series with said light emitting source; said series connection of said resistor and light emitting source being in parallel connection with said switch and said lamp to the electrical system of the vehicle.

64. The interior lamp assembly of claim 60 wherein said support includes a lamp socket for holding said lamp, and an aperture and a holder adjacent said aperture for receiving said light emitting source such that said light emitting source emits through said aperture.

65. The interior lamp assembly of claim 60 wherein said light emitting source is selected from the group consisting of a light emitting diode, a vacuum fluorescent source, an electroluminescent source, and a semiconductor laser source.

66. The interior lamp assembly of claim 65 wherein said light emitting source is a light emitting diode, said diode providing illumination of less than 60 lux measured at a distance of between about 22 and 26 inches from said source.

67. The interior lamp assembly of claim 66 including an electrical resistor connected in series with said diode, said resistor having a resistance between about 1000 and 200 ohms.

68. The assembly of claim 60 wherein said interior portion of the vehicle comprises at least one of an instrument panel area of the vehicle and a console area of the vehicle.

69. The assembly of claim 68 wherein said console area is one of a floor console area, a side door console area, a shift lever console area, and a roof console area.

70. The assembly of claim 68 wherein said interior portion is a shift lever console.

71. The assembly of claim 60 wherein said light emitting source operates at a current less than or equal to about 200 mA.

72. The assembly of claim 71 wherein said light emitting source operates at a current within the range of about 20 to about 100 mA.

73. The assembly of claim 71 wherein said light emitting source operates at a current of less than or equal to about 20 mA.

74. An interior rearview mirror assembly for a vehicle comprising:
a mirror case including a reflective mirror element;
a support for securing said assembly on the vehicle;
said assembly including a light emitting diode positioned to provide directed, low level illumination of at least one of an instrument panel area of the vehicle and a console area of the vehicle.

75. The assembly of claim 74 wherein the console area comprises one of a floor console area, a side door console area, a shift lever console area, and a roof console area.

76. The assembly of claim 75 wherein the console area is a shift lever console area.

77. The assembly of claim 76 further including at least one incandescent lamp for providing general illumination in the vehicle.

78. The assembly of claim 77 wherein the vehicle is a convertible.

79. The assembly of claim 75 wherein said light emitting diode operates at a current within the range of about 20 mA to about 100 mA.

80. The assembly of claim 79 wherein said assembly is an electrically operated rearview mirror assembly.

81. The assembly of claim 80 wherein said assembly further includes an electrical resistor connected in series with said light emitting diode.
82. The assembly of claim 81 wherein said resistor has a resistance within the range of between about 1000 and 200 ohms.
83. The assembly of claim 82 wherein said resistor has a resistance of about 470 ohms.